

The Russian View: Problems and Perspectives in the Balkans.

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For Russia, the Balkan states rate a high regional priority. From a geopolitical view, the region's problems are an unremitting threat to European and, by extension, world stability.

Many of the region's animosities are ages old and obdurate. To these are added new problems, mainly recent and internal, such as a plethora of refugees that have a dangerous, destabilizing effect on the area.

For this and other concerns, the Balkans are a point of tenderness for European security, provoking new challenges for the continent. So a long-term objective must be the integration of stable Balkan states into mainstream Europe.

The international community must find the means to prevent new conflicts. The EU, NATO, and the countries of the region must play a positive stabilizing role. The reputations of European organizations and their officials are at stake.

The outbreak of violence along Macedonia's northern boarder with Kosovo, along with trouble in southern Serbia and continuing unrest within Kosovo, did not come as a nasty surprise to Russian experts. They easily noted that the main problems of the region had not been solved by the NATO bombing.

Let me emphasize here the importance of non-military measures for the management of conflicts. At the critical early stage of conflict, all non-military means and pressure (economic, diplomatic) must be applied. Nevertheless, how effective this approach is remains a question.

At the same time, the means to respond to this new generation of threats to European security must be in place. These are mainly soft security, yet the responses will have consequences affecting peace and stability in Europe.

NATO-Russia cooperation in peacekeeping and crisis management in the Balkans dates from 1995 and the creation of IFOR for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Russian forces joined IFOR in January 1996 and continue to contribute to SFOR. Russian participation in SFORII consists of 1,300 men of a total of 20,000 (following the 1999/2000 restructuring and reduction of troops).

Russian participation in KFOR in Kosovo consists since 1999 of 3,000 men (less than 10% of the total), who are deployed in zones of Russian responsibility in the northern part of the American sector along the border with Serbia, the southern part of the French sector, and in the northern German sector. There is a Russian Headquarters in the British zone (at Velje), a Russian base at the Pristina international airport, and a military hospital. No Russian soldiers are in the Italian sector.

Russian participation in SFOR and KFOR is through special arrangements between NATO and Russia. Russia does not participate in planning or decision-making. Like other non-NATO forces, Russian troops take orders from SFOR and KFOR commanders via their respective multinational divisional headquarters. There are Russian liaison officers at SHAPE. Thus, in SFOR the First Russian Separate Airborne Brigade (in Ugljevik) operates under Russian command but is under the tactical control of the US-led Multinational Division (North).

The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council follows the NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997. The two sides agreed to consult on a wide range of security issues, including peacekeeping, international terrorism, military strategy, and nuclear doctrine.

The NATO air campaign of March-June 1999 against Yugoslavia caused Russia to withdraw from the Founding Act when the air-strikes began. In July 1999, meetings of the PJC resumed, but discussion was restricted to cooperation in peacekeeping operations, in particular the NATO-led Kosovo force KFOR, which Russia joined. In early 2000, NATO Secretary George Robertson and Russian President Putin met and both indicated a clear interest in improving relations. Soon after that the PJC resumed its regular meeting schedule.

Now to be decided is how to proceed in the future, how to develop cooperation between NATO and Russia in conflict management, and establishing the role of the PJC. SFOR and KFOR are a success story of cooperation between Russian and NATO troops. There may be political disagreement at the top, but on the ground there is a common understanding of the security problems.

Crisis management denotes long-term engagement. The results of this cooperation are positive; relations with NATO have improved, but some frustration remains on the Russian side. Russian representatives consider that their views are ignored by the NATO Commander. NATO has avoided the issue of the returning Serbian forces to Kosovo. Nevertheless, Russia and NATO support the return of the Serb minority population to Kosovo and its protection. The wider task of fighting chaos, crime, drug-trafficking, and the spread of Islamic extremism in Europe must become a priority for Russia-NATO cooperation. PJC could strengthen its institutional basis by creating a permanent secretariat and a new cooperative framework, so that Russia could participate in the planning and management of NATO operations.

The EU crisis-management force is in the making; it will be a division of labor between the US and Europe-EU, the latter concentrating mainly on soft security tasks. I support cooperation between a future EU crisis management force and Russia. In this context, both parties decide where and how such a force will be used as the EU becomes more engaged in Southeastern Europe.

It is also necessary to consider a possible US reduction of its military presence in Bosnia or a general withdrawal of its troops from Bosnia. The existence of Bosnia, and its becoming a democratic, multiethnic state, depends on fulfilling the Dayton agreement. Some suppose that if troops are withdrawn from Bosnia, Bosnia will fall apart. But are the Europeans responsible for developing a peace-keeping force, completely replacing the US forces? The EU countries have not expressed enthusiasm; such an outcome causes only concern in Europe.

After a withdrawal of American troops from Bosnia or their reduction, would Bosnia remain under NATO control or be transferred to the EU? Could OSCE provide leadership in managing operations in Bosnia? If so, this would allow the participation of all parties in the Bosnian operation, including non-members of the EU. 1995 arrangements concerning Russian participation in SFOR could be redefined. SFOR could be transformed.

The Kosovo problem can be resolved by implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1244; by unequivocally supporting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia; and by assuring autonomy for Kosovo as an integral part of the country. In the present situation, NATO needs to assume a tougher stance towards the KLA Albanian militants.

Without a stable, democratic, and multiethnic Yugoslavia, there can be no stability in the Balkans. Yugoslavia should become a base of its stability and security. The full integration of Yugoslavia into the international community would be achieved by lifting all remaining sanctions - including the embargo on arms

imports. Now more than ever, Yugoslav leadership and institutions of power need the understanding and aid of the international community; only then can the continuity of the political and economic transformation of FR Yugoslavia be assured.

Negotiating the future status of Kosovo will begin after the scheduled elections in Kosovo in November, 2001. The mission of the international community is to force Kosovar politicians to play a positive role in stabilizing the region. Wider autonomy with political integration of Kosovo within Yugoslavia would be optimal despite the opposition of the radical wing of the Albanian Kosovar community. Any other scenarios can only elevate the extremism of the Macedonian Albanians.

Now is the time for every state and the international community to decide whether they support those who want to build a democratic, multiethnic Yugoslavia, or those who spread ethnic division.

The international community must admit that in Kosovo, southern Serbia, and Macedonia evidence of international terrorism abounds, and firm barriers must be in place to prevent another explosion in the Balkans. After NATO's bombing campaign in 1999 and the arrival of KFOR and UNMIK, Kosovo has become a hotbed of terrorism.

Macedonia faces pressure from the most openly extreme Albanian circles, unquestionably the source and cause of insecurity in the Balkans. Macedonian security is guaranteed by NATO; so it is the international community's responsibility to curb nationalism in the region. It can start by not implying - directly or indirectly - that forming new states is even a remote hope.

Terrorism must be decisively opposed, for its nature and essence have distinctly changed. Under the verbal tent of Nationalism's congregated criminal anti-social elements and groups. But these extremists will not succeed in staging a repeat Kosovo adventure.

Today's extremists are attempting to provoke the Yugoslav and Macedonian governments to use force against ethnic Albanians; they hope that the western media will again raise the question of non-proportional use of force, ethnic cleansing, and civilian casualties. But it is now clear to the world that the actions of the terrorists do not enhance or promote the interests of the peoples who live in these areas. Nevertheless, attempts to negotiate the end of armed violence seem only to further radical, terrorist activity.

The international community faces problems not only affecting the future of the Balkans but also the security of Europe: that is, how to stop the violence, the ethnic cleansing, the multiple civilian catastrophes, and the flood of refugees? The solutions are not in unrestricted bombing or a massive military presence. New

approaches that stress and reflect the political will of the countries involved are in order, actively supported by the international community.

To achieve this, Moscow proposes that regional states be responsible for assuring strict respect for the basic principles of international relations which are incorporated in the UN Constitution; such as recognizing the equality of states and respecting territorial integrity; the disuse of force, and an intolerance of use of one's territory for the organization, support, or participation in military, semi-military, or terrorist activities. This document could be attached to the OSCE as an annex to the Stability Pact in the SEE. Implementing this proposal would change the Balkans from a center of tension and turmoil into a region of peace, stability, and prosperity.

What other risks, threats, and challenges to European security now exist in the Balkans? The political risks are characterized by the incompetence and backwardness of democratic institutes. Some countries can be described in modern political science as "failed states" the central authority cannot effectively control the country. When analyzing Balkan events the emphasis should be on the problem of central authority. Only in stable environments can the new Balkan states complete economic changes and become a presence in the marketplace. At present, the states are dependent on foreign credit, technology, and power resources.

The societal risks are caused by the generally low standard of living of a large part of the population. Unemployment and economic emigration have reached a high level. Add to this the economic burden of supporting a flood of refugees.

Regional cooperation is linked directly to European integration. The people of the peninsula see themselves as a part of Europe.

There are a host of regional and sub-regional initiatives that are designed both to boost regional cooperation, and hasten accession to the EU. Russia participates in these: the SEE Stability Pact (full participation); the process of cooperation of the SEE states (Russia is invited as observer to the meetings of ministers of foreign affairs); the Black Sea economic cooperation (full participation); the cooperative initiative for SEE - SECI (participation). Russia is a guarantor of the Dayton agreements, the negotiator under article V of appendix 1-A Dayton concerning stabilization in former Yugoslavia and its environs.

The range of Russian participation covers maintaining security and cooperation in the region and taking part in its economic reconstruction.

In the area of energy power, the Balkan countries traditionally import Russian fuel and other energy resources.

Russian oil YUKOS signed a \$20-million contract with JANAF to upgrade the Adria pipeline and integrate it with the Druzhba pipeline. The new company, YUKOS-Adria, will carry out the project, which will result in the export of five million tons a year of Russian crude oil via Belarus and Ukraine through Slovakia, Hungary, and the deep-water port at Omisalj. YUKOS has guaranteed 2.5 million tons (50,000 bbl/d) for the pipeline; this will give Russian exporters a direct route to world markets via the Adriatic Sea, bypassing the congested Bosphorus Straits.

Croatia is a stable, reliable political and economic partner of Russia in the region. Intensive political dialogue at different levels between Russia and Croatia now exist and are expanding. Bilateral documents were signed, the major one being a mutual declaration of friendship and cooperation (1998).

Concerning trade and economic cooperation with Russia (about 700 million dollars), Croatia plays the leading role among the countries of former Yugoslavia. This figure could increase to one billion dollars in the near future, given the Croatian potential in the areas of telecommunication equipment, shipbuilding, pharmaceuticals, construction, and tourism.

The main objectives of bilateral relations are these:

To develop regular political dialogue with the Balkan countries based on international law, common interests, and mutual respect.

To intensify the participation of intergovernmental committees and commissions so as to heighten their success in resolving current issues.

To maximize the mutual benefits that accrue from Soviet / Russian technology and technical support.

To expand traditional historic ties with the Balkan countries, especially in science and culture.

To employ the skills of the Russian Ministry on Emergencies in solving specific regional problems.